

IN THE LOOP



December 2019

Update From the Superintendent



Semester One of the 2019-2020 School Year

It is hard to believe that we have already completed 50% of the school year! We have had a great first half and I could not be prouder of our students and staff. I am also thankful for the support our kids and school family receive from parents and our community. Every person in a student's life plays an essential role in supporting his or her educational journey and it is an honor to serve our amazing kids on this amazing team!

I hope your family enjoys a wonderful winter break. Whether you are celebrating Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, or simply half-time of the school year, I hope you get a chance to spend quality time with those you love, rest up and recharge for a few days!

I would love to know all of the family and cultural traditions and special days our kids, staff, and families celebrate now and throughout the year. I know one common thread we all share is how thankful and grateful we are for our CCS family.

I shared with our staff that there are multitudes of miracles that occur every minute in the lives of our students far and wide across our boundaries and that those gifts will last long after the wrapping paper and decorations are put away. Isn't the best gift making a positive difference in someone's life, especially the life of a child? Thank you for all you do to make that difference!

I am proud to be your superintendent and I can't wait to see what our team will do for our kids in 2020!

With thankfulness,
Dr. B.

CCS Wants to Be...The Best at Getting Better!

This year, a friend shared a conversation and a quote with me about, "Being the Best at Getting Better!" The more I pondered on it and shared it with the team, it became clear that it should become this year's theme. At CCS, we want to be... "The Best at Getting Better!"

It seems like everyone wants to be the best, but defining and measuring that standard is subjective. Most of the time it causes us to compare ourselves to others and unfortunately, creates winners and losers. I like the concept of "The Best at Getting Better" because every member of the CCS family can focus on a commitment to continuous individual and team improvement. If we continue to improve, no one has to worry about winning or losing because success will take care of itself.

I believe a lot of our anxiety these days comes from constantly comparing ourselves to one another. Focusing on individual and team improvement takes that pressure away.

The conclusion: Everyone has something to improve upon. No one is perfect, so let's work on getting better in our individual skill sets and in our learning communities. This way, we can move forward both personally and as a team. Most importantly, our kids get the best we have to give!



Thank You Dr. Stephanoff and Welcome Dr. Oestreich!

I wanted to share some important news regarding some leadership changes that will occur in January. As you may or may not know, Dr. Steve Stephanoff came out of retirement to lead our Human Resources team for the past two years. He and his team have worked tirelessly to improve services and processes in the department and have made gains that most people might not see, but have been great steps forward. Dr. Stephanoff has always been a proponent of continuous improvement and works hard to bring the best talent available to CCS.

Last month, the Board approved Dr. Tom Oestreich to lead the HR Department as the new Assistant Superintendent of Staff and Student Services. Dr. Oestreich comes to us from Washington Township where he served as Assistant Superintendent. He has been in education for 20 years and began his career as a student teacher at Carmel High School in the music department. Since then, he has been a teacher, building administrator, director, and Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources. At Washington Township, his duties included overseeing the student services department and the daily operations of the district. He brings great experience and a skill set that is a perfect fit to advance the good work of our HR team, as well as, support our student services team. He will begin on January 6, 2020. Please join me in welcoming him to the CCS family.

To learn more about Dr. Oestreich, please click on this [press release](#).



School Day Study

We received great feedback from parents and staff last spring to move forward with our study of the school day. I had hoped to bring a final recommendation to the Board this December on the proposed changes to the school day, but we have additional work to do in making sure our latest plan will meet transportation needs. We are also working closely with the Carmel Teachers Association to ensure we have a solid plan that does not result in any unintended consequences. If a change is approved, it would go into effect next school year. Here are the main points of the most recent version of the plan.

- **Start the Secondary (Middle School & High School) Day at 8:45 a.m. and End at 3:45 p.m.**

This time schedule represents a slight reduction in non-instructional time at both levels.

- **Start the Elementary Day at 7:55 a.m. (10 minutes earlier) and end at 2:55 p.m.**

This is 30 minutes longer than the current elementary school day. The extra time will use 15 minutes to create a 30 minute recess block for all students each day (current daily recess is 15 minutes) and the other 15 minutes will be added to the instructional block for flexible learning time determined by teachers. This time can be used to extend STEM lessons, Social-Emotional Learning, Genius Hour, or WIN (What I Need) time. The earlier start time is needed to create a 50-minute window between elementary and secondary bus routes.

- **District-Wide Late Start Days**

We have made a few changes after receiving feedback from parents and teachers. The current plan is to implement 45-minute late start days twice a month to give teachers time to plan together to improve instruction. This is a reduction from the original proposal of one hour. We are also exploring free childcare on late start days for elementary and middle school students for parents who may need to drop students off at the regular time.

We appreciate your patience as we work the process and follow our guiding principles in making sure our students' best interests are at the center of every decision and that their academic, social, emotional, and physical needs are addressed.



Clay Center Elementary School

The Board heard a recommendation at the December Board Meeting to name the new elementary school on Clay Center Road, "Clay Center Elementary School."

The recommendation was derived from information provided at the October 14, 2019 Board Workshop, where Mr. A.J. Wright of the Carmel Historical Society presented information on the history of Carmel Clay Schools. He shared that on September 25, 1912, Clay Township opened a new brick school on the northeast corner of 116th Street and Clay Center Road. "The school was named "Clay Center" and "had four classrooms on the main floor and a large assembly room on the second floor." The location of the original Clay Center school is just south of where the new elementary school will be located on Clay Center Road.

Construction Progress

Construction has started on the Clay Center Road property as earthmovers prepare the site for construction. Work on the new Carmel Elementary School will begin in the spring. Both schools are scheduled to open in the fall of the 2021-2022 school year.

You can [click here](#) for elementary school construction updates and photos.



Redistricting

Redistricting is a word few people want to hear, but as the district prepares to open the two new elementary schools, we have the opportunity to re-balance the enrollments of our elementary and middle schools. Currently, we have some schools operating at over-capacity and others well under-capacity. Next fall, we will begin the process of re-balancing the district. There will be multiple opportunities for parent and community participation in that process. We plan to bring a final recommendation on boundary changes to the Board by the end of the fall 2020 semester.

Dr. Harmas Named Indiana High School Principal of the Year

Dr. Tom Harmas, Camel High School Principal, was named 2019 Indiana State High School Principal of the Year by the Indiana Association of State Principals. Dr. Harmas was awarded the honor at a banquet celebration on the evening of November 22nd. Dr. Harmas will now represent



Carmel Clay Schools at the National Principal of the Year Competition.

Dr. Harmas was selected based on his exemplary leadership. As principal of the state's largest high school with 5,300 students and 700 staff members, his collaborative leadership has cultivated a supportive environment where students learn, grow and excel both academically and as young people of good character. He and his team persistently focuses on making a large high school feel small and more personal by creating opportunities for students to be known, connected, and engaged.

Dr. Harmas is the epitome of a school leader who has earned the respect and love of the student body, his staff, colleagues, parents, and the community. He sees every challenge as an opportunity to make CHS a better and special place for students and staff. We are proud of Dr. Harmas and congratulate him on this outstanding achievement.

To read more about Dr. Harmas and this honor, [click here](#).



Referendum Update

Work is underway to place a highly trained, armed Carmel School Resource Officer in every school in the district and provide additional mental health programming for students. Carmel Police and CCS administrators completed interviews for hiring the first four additional SRO officers, and we look forward to having these officers join the SRO Unit next fall. In addition, the first step in adding mental health supports for our students and families has begun, as a request for proposals was released to seek mental health service providers. The district expects to award the contract(s) for services at its March 27, 2020 board meeting. Thank you to our Carmel community and the Carmel SOS parent group, for your support in keeping our kids safe.

Mohawk Trails Elementary Named "Blue Ribbon School"



This fall, Mohawk Trails Elementary School earned the prestigious National Blue Ribbon Award from the U.S. Department of Education. Mohawk Trails Elementary was one of only 362 schools across the country to receive this honor. Principal Jennifer Greene and Assistant Principal Sara Agee flew to Washington, D.C on November 14th to accept the award on behalf of their school community.



In addition, State Superintendent Jennifer McCormick recognized Mrs. Greene, Mrs. Agee, and several MTE teachers at the State Capitol. The National Blue Ribbon Award is one of the highest honors a school can reach. This award could not have happened without the dedication of our teachers and the combined efforts of students, parents and community members. Congratulations to the Mohawk Trails Elementary community! We are proud of our Turtle family!